Audit of Prasar Bharati and Air

570. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION and BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the CAG has refused to conduct audit of Prasar Bharati and AIR on the ground that the Ministry has not taken any action against those already found to have committed financial irregularities;

(b) if so, the details of TV producers and serials against whom CAG suggested to take action last time;

(c) the reasons as to why Government did not take any action; and

(d) the reaction of Government on the refusal of CAG to audit Prasar Bharati and AIR?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI ARJUN JAITLEY): (a) to (d) The Comptroller and Auditor General of India audit accounts of Prasar Bharati every year. In his report for year ending 31st March, 1996, the CAG had audited the case relating to the serial 'Sri Krishna' and had pointed out that the telecast time for the serial was increased from 30 to 45 minutes whereas the telecast fee and free commercial time were doubled. Since substantially more income accrues to the Producer from free commercial time, it amounted to loss of revenue to Doordarshan. At that stage the Doordarshan authorities however took the view that there was no real loss. While increasing the timings of the programme from 30 minutes to 45 minutes, the telecast fee was doubled while the free commercial time was increased from 120 seconds to 240 seconds in the same ratio. Doordarshan earned revenue for 15 episodes on this basis at Rs. 10.14 lakhs per episode. However, with effect from 14.1.1996 the alternative system was applied wherein for the increase of timing from 30 to 45 minutes the telecast fees was increased by one and a half times from Rs. 3 lakhs to Rs 4.5 lakhs and free commercial time was increased from 120 seconds to 180 seconds. For 15 episodes on this basis the revenue, in fact, declined to Rs. 7.11 lakhs per episode. In the opinion of Doordarshan actually it did not show loss of revenue.

The Prasar Bharati Board had appointed Shri Arjun Agrawal, an outside expert, to look into certain cases which included the case of serial 'Sri Krishna'. The reports submitted by Shri Arjun Agrawal in April, 1999 were considered by the Board in June, 1999 and the Board decided that the Government may request CAG to conduct a quick special audit, inter alia, relating to 'Sri Krishna'. On receiving reference from CEO, Prasar Bharati a request was accordingly made in August, 1999 to CAG to conduct a special audit in this regard. The CAG advised on September 27, 1999 that his organization had already audited the matter relating to 'Shri Krishna' and report had been submitted in 1997, therefore, CAG stated that no special audit in this matter is again called for. However, in all other cases referred, the CAG is conducting an audit.

Special Audit of Prasar Bharati and AIR

571. SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:
SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA:

Will the Minister of INFORMATION and BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) wether it is a fact that the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) refused to conduct a special audit of Prasar Bharati and AIR on the ground that his Ministry has not taken any action against those already found to have committed financial irregularities;

(b) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item appearing in the Hindustan Times, dated 23rd October, 1999 in this regard; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI ARJUN JAITLEY): (a) to (c) The Government has noted the news item regarding the serial 'Sri Krishna' appearing in the 'Hindustan Times'. The facts of the case are as follows:

The Comptroller and Audit General of India audits accounts of Prasar Bharati every year. In his report for year ending 31st March, 1996, the CAG had audited the case relating to the serial 'Sri Krishna' and had pointed out that the telecast time for the serial